



University of Sussex

Education & Social Work

**Evaluation of 'Musical Bridges' –
a Paul Hamlyn Foundation Special Initiative**

**Final Evaluation report
February 2013**

Executive Summary

**Dr. Alison Daubney, Duncan Mackrill & Professor
Judy Sebba**

Executive Summary

This report is of an evaluation funded by the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation, undertaken between June 2011 and February 2013 of the Musical Bridges Programme.

Musical Bridges

'Musical Bridges' is a 'special initiative' funded by the Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) since 2010 which aims to:

'improve young people's musical progression as they transfer from primary school to secondary school' through 'provid(ing) a continuous and progressive musical experience for 9-13 year olds that supports their personal, social and educational development'.

There are multiple strands to Musical Bridges¹, although a major aspect is a continuing professional development (CPD) programme, working with schools and music services. This report has considered evaluation evidence drawn from the CPD element as well as the wider Musical Bridges programme. The report comes at the end of the evaluation of Musical Bridges that began in July 2011, six months after the CPD programme was initially implemented. In part, the CPD programme builds upon the earlier 'evidence gathering' phases of Musical Bridges which commenced in 2010. There have been two CPD phases within Musical Bridges:

- CPD1 took place in three geographical areas, initially engaging with three music services, 10 secondary schools and 16 primary schools (commenced Jan 2011);
- CPD2 initially engaged 10 music hubs, 25 secondary schools and 54 primary schools (commenced Jan 2012)

The Evaluation

Key aims for PHF of the evaluation were to evaluate the impact, identify the most promising aspects to inform future phases and promote scale up of Musical Bridges. In addition, the evaluation explored the potential for transferring the approach to other subjects and how Musical Bridges might influence wider school practices.

The evaluation is based on data collected from a wide variety of stakeholders across all areas in both phases of Musical Bridges using multiple data collection methods. Additionally two CPD2 areas were selected for more in-depth evaluation. The data collected across all elements of the evaluation represents the views of stakeholders from 29 primary schools, 17 secondary schools and 13 music services (now hub leads). Questionnaire responses from 304 pupils, 50 of which were tracked longitudinally from year 6 to year 8, as well as interviews with 235 pupils in small groups, also form part of the data set.

¹ More information on Musical Bridges can be found on their website. See: www.musicalbridges.org.uk
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It should be noted that due to operational difficulties within the Musical Bridges programme, the in-depth evaluation data collected from CPD2 is not from the areas originally selected and that there was limited engagement in the evaluation and the programme from one of the CPD1 areas.

This executive summary is based upon key points from the full evaluation report submitted to Musical Bridges (February 2013) and builds upon an interim report (January 2012).

Main findings

There is almost unanimous agreement amongst those contributing to the Musical Bridges evaluation that being part of the project has had a positive impact on raising the profile of music transition. Schools with teachers and head teachers who are interested in both music and transition have generally been the ones who have continued to support both phases of Musical Bridges. The resulting collaboration with other organisations may help improve music education in the future.

In most cases, there is limited evidence of changes in practice and outcomes at all levels. However, in isolated cases, there has been substantial progress in relation to transition development in and through music.

Engagement

- Musical Bridges has, at times, engaged practitioners well and helped improve confidence in relation to music, particularly with primary teachers.
- Sustaining engagement in Musical Bridges has been challenging. There has been a considerable drop-out from both CPD1 and CPD2. From CPD1, two secondary schools and five primary schools are still actively involved and in CPD2, just over a third of schools continue to be engaged in Musical Bridges. Whilst this is particularly low, engaging schools in research and CPD programmes is a challenge we encounter across all our work
- There has been an increased focus on transition in organisations which have engaged with the Musical Bridges programme.
- Transition practices were already notably strong in many organisations involved in Musical Bridges. The programme has helped some organisations to recognise and celebrate their own strengths in relation to both music and transition.
- Some schools have not had the opportunity to work with linked schools during Musical Bridges. This has limited their potential to develop meaningful transition practices. Transition involves multiple organisations; sustainability requires support and the required 'ingredients' being valued in linked organisations, and relationships being built and sustained.

Purpose

- Nearly three quarters of evaluation participants still engaged in Musical Bridges are clear on the commitment expected from their organisation in relation to the programme. However, in a number of cases, confusion remains about the purpose and aims of Musical Bridges, as well as the potential outcomes it seeks, the commitment and time expected from organisations.
- It is not always clear to schools or practitioners what they will gain from engaging with Musical Bridges. This is particularly applicable to primary schools, where staff often consider that secondary schools have more to gain from developing transition practices.
- The perception of the quality of the Musical Bridges programme is varied. Musical Bridges engages with a diverse community of practitioners with a range of different needs, experiences, language and values. For example, factors such as understanding, confidence and language vary significantly between different participants. Some participants suggested that Musical Bridges might make better use of their expertise to lead aspects of the CPD programme in their own clusters.
- Pupils from one secondary school suggested that music lessons in secondary school help them settle and make new friends, although many of the opportunities which bring pupils from different primary schools together were not considered by pupils as beneficial to assist transition as they rarely got to meet and work with other pupils. However, these joint musical events were enjoyed as musical events in their own right.
- Pupils from one secondary school identified that having opportunities to work with teachers from secondary schools whilst at primary school and opportunities to visit the secondary school were beneficial to helping transition. Additionally, they valued the opportunities for cross-phase working when pupils from the secondary school came to work with them.

Resources

- The original 'Five Bridges' research (Galton et al., 1999) was considered extremely useful by many senior leaders and provides a tangible, holistic framework for schools to evaluate their current practices and work out incremental stages of development in relation to general transition issues. Four schools from CPD1 are planning to use this to develop transition more generally across their school trust partnership.
- The Music Transition Tracker developed by Musical Bridges was deemed to be useful by 63% of evaluation participants.
- There are mixed views about the data transfer tool being developed by Paritor. Whilst the transfer of some data between organisations is deemed important, some secondary music teachers worry that it is of limited use to them and

potentially too time consuming. Visiting schools and observing others was mentioned as a more useful way to develop practice and plan progressive musical learning opportunities.

Structure and sustainability

- Bringing people together to network, get to know each other and identify colleagues in local schools with an interest in music has consistently been identified as the most beneficial element of the Musical Bridges programme.
- Support from senior leadership in schools and music services has varied greatly across the organisations which have engaged with Musical Bridges. Having an openly supportive headteacher and senior leadership seems to be crucial to success, although this does not necessarily mean that these leaders need to attend meetings. The CPD1 schools that fully embraced the project all have supportive headteachers and senior leaders who have historically valued music in their schools.
- The Musical Bridges CPD2 sessions were arranged after school to encourage maximum attendance but led to some senior leaders to interpret this as indicating that music is not a priority.
- Music is not always taught regularly in schools, particularly in primary schools. However, most pupils agreed that they like music and would like to do more at school. Only around 25% of pupils responding from years 6, 7 and 8 thought that their teacher knew what they did musically outside of school.
- Lack of continuity in instrumental teaching provision, access to instruments and the cost of lessons were cited as principal reasons why pupils did not continue learning instruments when changing school.
- 40% of CPD2 evaluation participants stated that they could identify changes in transition practice following their engagement with Musical Bridges. Changes reportedly resulting in pupil impact relate to the bureaucratic (B), social (S) and curriculum (C) bridges, although examples are isolated. Specific examples include a tracking system for year 7 (B), joint primary and secondary activities e.g. concerts, and additional transition days to build pupils' confidence (S), introduction of whole year group singing in year 7 and specific units of work delivered in a primary school and built upon in year 7 (C).
- Most organisations identified at least one potential way in which they could potentially use the learning from Musical Bridges during the next academic year.
- Practitioner mobilisation (i.e. encouraging practitioners to reflect upon and develop their own practice by observing and working alongside colleagues in other settings and across phases) has consistently been one of the most valued aspects of the Musical Bridges programme. Where it has taken place there is clear evidence of multiple ways in which this has helped to develop self-reflection, curriculum, pedagogy, opportunities and cross-phase awareness. However, it is

currently not perceived as integral to the programme being rolled out, despite being promoted by Musical Bridges.

- Approximately half of the evaluation responses from organisations still engaged with Musical Bridges stated that they expected the work to continue if they left their organisation. Participants from Music Hubs were the most likely to state this positively whereas most primary school staff felt that it was unlikely.
- There is no common agreement from schools and organisations about who is best placed to lead transition development in a particular geographical area. In reality, the most suitable lead partner depends upon the existing relationships between schools and with local music services / hub leads, highlighting the need for a flexible approach.

Key recommendations

1. Musical Bridges should clarify the vision for the programme, including the projected timescale, aims, outcomes and expected levels of commitment (which need to be realistic), so participants know what they are signing up for, how it will be professionally beneficial to them and how it will benefit their pupils.
2. Greater clarity is needed about the kinds of impact being sought for all participants and organisations, particularly the impact upon pupils, and how this could be observed and potentially measured or documented.
3. Musical Bridges should continue to reflect upon levels of engagement and seek to maximise retention, exploring and accepting the reasons why this is currently low.
4. To increase impact and sustainability, Musical Bridges should prioritise engaging whole clusters of primary schools, secondary schools and external providers that are linked (i.e. by pupils transitioning between these organisations) in order for the relationships to meaningfully benefit pupils and staff and have a greater chance of being developed and sustained. Musical Bridges should adopt a flexible approach and range of models in relation to who is best placed to lead a cluster on transition development.
5. 'Practitioner mobilisation' – where practitioners are encouraged to meet face to face to reflect upon and develop their own practice by observing and working alongside colleagues in other settings and across phases - should be embedded as a central component of the programme.
6. Ensure a consistent high quality programme is built upon the needs and strengths of all organisations and individuals involved, recognising the different roles and musical expertise that each play in transition. Allowing some participants with appropriate skills and expertise to lead aspects of the CPD programme in their own clusters could additionally help to make the programme more targeted and may also minimise the perception of Musical Bridges as a 'top

down delivery' rather than a practitioner directed programme.

7. Galton, Grey and Ruddock's (1999) 'Five Bridges' model should retain a central role in the CPD programme and any future development in other curriculum areas relating to transition.
8. The accessibility, quantity, purpose, value and layout of online resources need to be considered in future CPD. These need to be accessible and valued by the audience with which they wish to engage. Short and succinct step-by-step instructions, highlighting key points, may be helpful for organisations wishing to develop transition.
9. The Transition Tracker tool, whilst in a number of respects useful and with considerable potential, could be much more intuitively developed as a central part of the programme. This would effectively enable participants to identify and track their own progress and next steps, and to become a more effective self-reflection tool.
10. Building upon key priorities noted by Ofsted (2012) and DfE (2011) is an opportunity for Musical Bridges to develop a system of storing sound and audio-based portfolios which evidence musical development, progression and participation over time through a secure online environment. This may help to broaden the perception of Musical Bridges primarily being concerned with the summer transition window from year 6 to year 7.

References

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